

Historic, Archive Document

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Historic Route



Williams to Flagstaff Auto Tour

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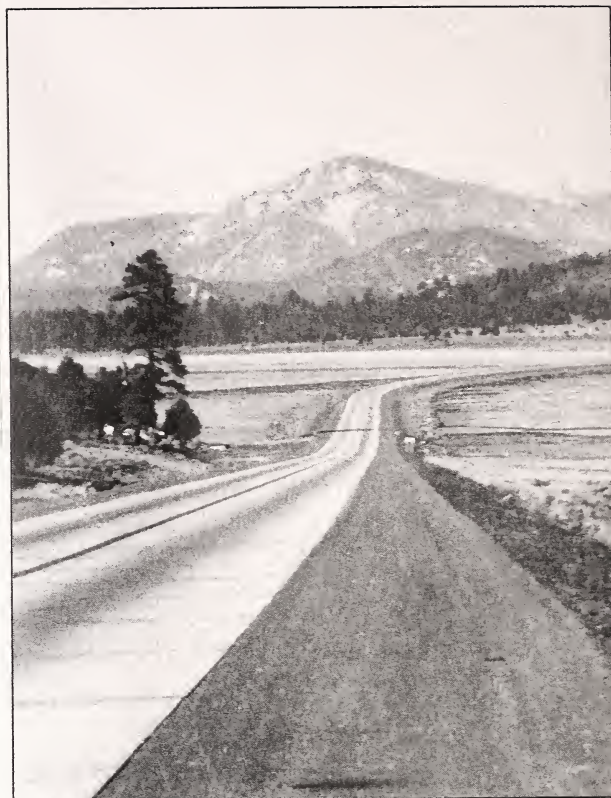
from the highway's heyday. In 1984, Williams became the last Route 66 town in America to be bypassed by Interstate 40.

Pittman Valley was first settled by ranchers in the 1870s. Tourists found guest cabins and a gas station along the road here.

Garland Prairie Vista has a beautiful view of the San Francisco Peaks, the highest mountains in Arizona. A favorite with photographers, this view appeared on many Route 66 postcards.

Parks is a small community that started out as a railroad stop in the 1880s and later became a wayside for highway tourists. When the highway was thriving, the area had a Forest Service campground, several motels, gas stations, curio shops, and a road that led north to the Grand Canyon. Parks in the Pines General Store, in business for over 80 years, is still well worth a visit. Several old alignments of Route 66 can be seen here, including abandoned stretches of 1922 and 1931 roadway. Take a walk on a 3/4 mile section of the "ghost road" just east of Parks.

West of **Brannigan Park**, you pass over the highest point anywhere on Route 66. This beautiful stretch of Ponderosa pine forest is 7,300 feet above sea level. Brannigan Park is lined with turn-of-the-century homesteads and abandoned roadside businesses. These all closed when Route 66 was realigned to the south in 1941 to avoid the steep climb to the pass.



The tour winds through beautiful scenery towards Bill Williams Mountain. Interstate 40 now covers this section of Route 66 at Davenport Lake.



Williams, pictured here in about 1950, still retains the spirit of early travel along Route 66. Photos courtesy of Arizona Department of Library, Archives, and Public Records.



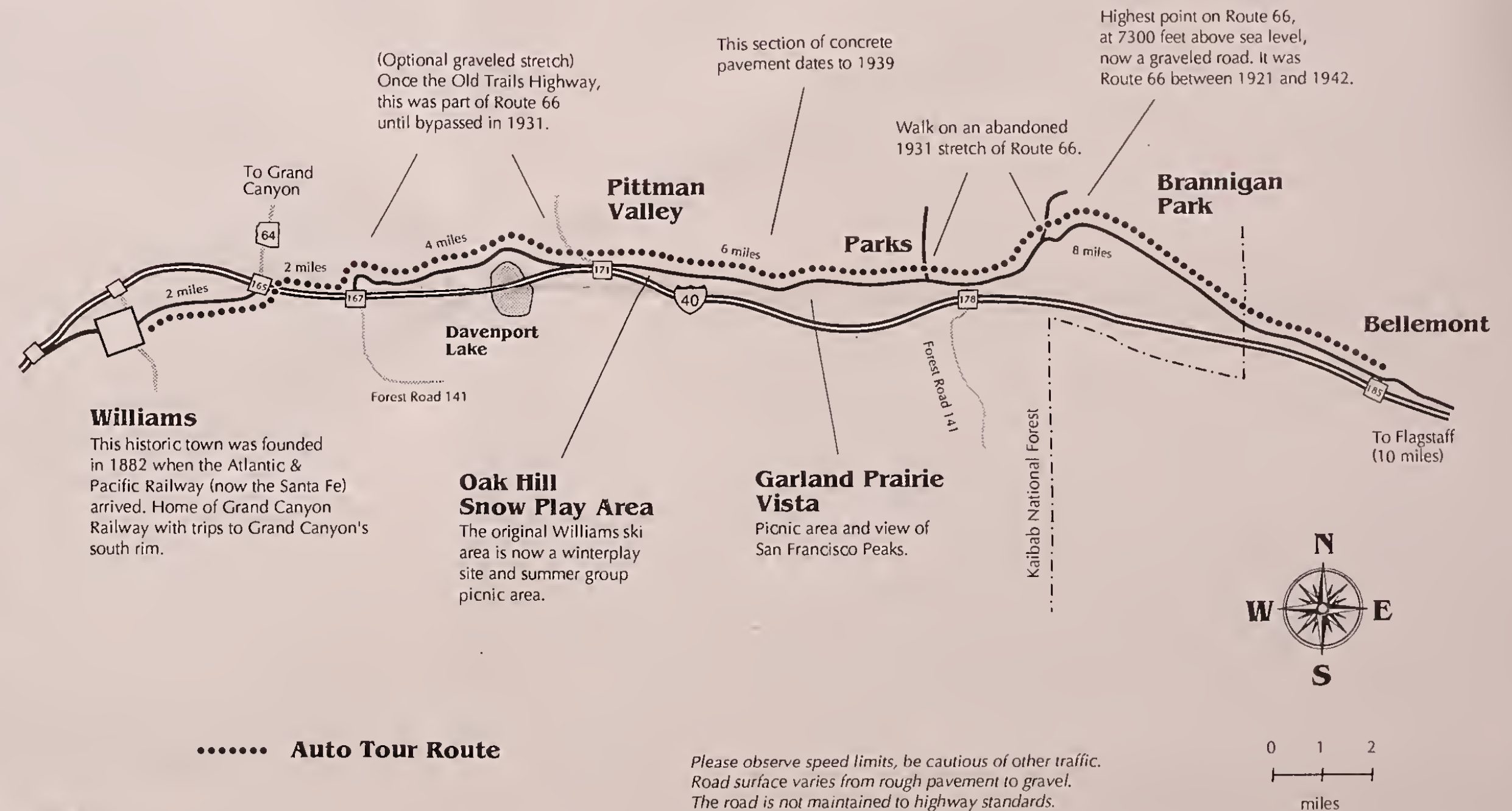
Route 66 wound across scenery most Americans only saw on the pages of magazines. Stretching 2,448 miles, the road was a highway to the American dream of hope, adventure and freedom. In the 1920s, pioneer motorists found excitement on the road in their "tin lizzies." During the Great Depression, Route 66 carried Dust Bowl refugees west in search of a better life. During World War II it served the military to carry soldiers and supplies. After the war, the highway became a pathway of promise for millions of people heading west for a new life, or a once in a lifetime vacation.

All this started at the beginning of the century. Model T motorists, forced to follow muddy wagon trails from town to town as they bounced their way west, organized and lobbied for better roads. The Old Trails Highway was built in the early 1920s along the course of the Santa Fe Railroad. Designated Route 66 in 1926, this first, unpaved road was rough, narrow, twisting, and steep, but it opened the doors to the scenic southwest.

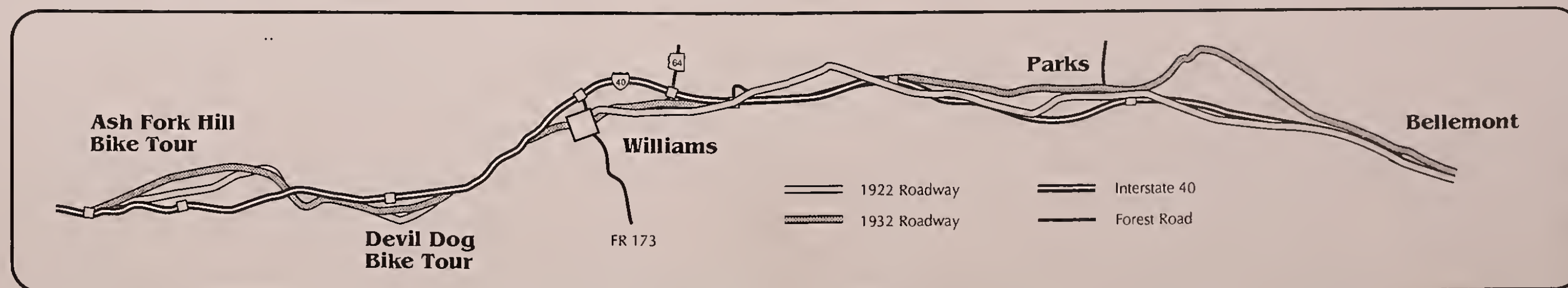
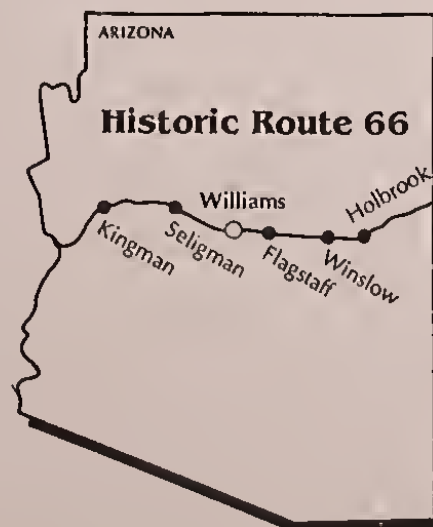
Americans took to the open road in record numbers during the 1920s, overloading the nation's highways. Federal funding for road building increased in the 1930s, fueled by the ever growing demand for better roads and the need to put the unemployed to work during the Great Depression. A new more modern Route 66 was finally built. In 1938, Route 66 became the first completely paved cross-country highway in the United States. Its straighter and wider travelway, better visibility, and gentler grades attracted even more travelers.

This road became America's Main Street, its most famous highway. It was celebrated in song, in books, and with its own television program. But the success of Route 66 would become its downfall. Despite improvements and realignments in the 1940s and 1950s, traffic finally overwhelmed the highway. Its replacement, Interstate 40, was begun in 1956. The last stretch of Route 66, in Williams, was bypassed in 1984. Still, the legend of America's Main Street lives on. Several sections of old Route 66, including this tour, are now listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Historic Route 66 Auto Tour



A mountain bike tour of Historic Route 66 on the Kaibab National Forest is also available.





Historic Route 66 can be accessed from Interstate 40 at several points. From Williams to Flagstaff, the tour takes an estimated 45 minutes. The most scenic section is between Pittman Valley and Bellemont.

Route 66 is not maintained to highway standards. Sections of the tour are on graveled roads. Please drive with care.

From Williams

Travel through Williams on Bill Williams Avenue (Route 66). Take I-40 east toward Flagstaff. Exit at Garland Prairie Road (exit 167) for the optional tour on the graveled Old Trails Highway. For the paved Route 66 Tour, take the Pittman Valley Road Exit (# 171), head north over the interstate, and turn right onto Route 66. Continue on the roadway to the Parks In the Pines General Store, a popular stop during the highway's heyday. You may return to I-40 here or continue on a graveled road to Brannigan Park, which marks the end of the tour. To rejoin I-40, follow the frontage road east.

From Flagstaff

From the I-40 and I-17 interchange in Flagstaff, it is a 33.4 mile drive to Williams. Take I-40 west, 10 miles to Bellemont, and exit at Transwestern Road (#185). Turn north to the frontage road and parallel I-40 west for 3 miles. At that point you'll pass the Kaibab National Forest boundary marker. This is your entry to Historic Route 66.

The above section of the road is unpaved. If you'd rather travel a paved section of Route 66, stay on I-40 past Transwestern Road to Parks (Exit #178). Leave the highway here and head west on a 6 mile stretch of historic pavement. Pittman Valley Road reconnects you with the freeway at Exit 171. At this point, you may choose to continue west past the Deer Farm for another 4 miles on a graveled section of the former Old Trails Highway. This predecessor of Route 66 returns to I-40 at Exit 167. You can then return to the Main Street of America at Williams, Exit 165.



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The Route 66 Auto Tour is part of an ongoing effort to make places of historic interest available for you to enjoy on your National Forest, truly a land of many uses. While you're enjoying this ride into the past, don't forget to notice the present. Watch for evidence of stock grazing, timber sales and reforestation, hunters, woodcutters, hikers, and bikers. All are here just as you, to make use of some feature of this diverse and productive land.

You can do your part to take care of your National Forest and keeping it free of litter. Remember to leave historic sites, artifacts and all cultural remains untouched so that others may enjoy them as you have.

For more information about Historic Route 66, contact:

Historic Route 66 Association of Arizona
P.O. Box 66
1400 Andy Devine
Kingman, AZ 86402

Read more about
Route 66. Visit your
local library or book
store.



Recreational maps of the Kaibab National Forest can be purchased at your local Forest Service office or sporting goods store.

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For More Information On This Tour, Contact:

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USDA Forest Service
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